

Little Crow at Northam—The annual migrations of the Little Crow (*Corvus bennetti*) have been noted in the Northam area, and on occasions the birds have been seen to settle in trees, apparently for a rest, before flying on again. During May 1969, however, large numbers remained in the area, and on May 13 a flock of approximately 80 were seen circling and moving from north to south before settling in trees near the south branch of the Mortlock River at Seabrook.

The Little Crows remained here throughout May and June and at the beginning of July a few were still being seen; just how many was hard to judge, as they were mingled with the Ravens, (*C. coronoides*) although one could approach much closer to the Little Crows than to the Ravens.

This period coincided with the lambing period on many farms here, and it was a common thing, when a ewe lambed, to find some 20 or so Little Crows around her; and several ewes which were unable to rise after lambing were found with an eye picked out, and one healthy lamb was found wandering around with both eyes picked out. On two occasions when a ewe had gone down to lamb, but was unable to rise again without help, her only partially born lamb had both eyes picked out and was dead.

On occasions the birds were seen to settle on the backs of strong, healthy wether sheep in another paddock to such an extent that the sheep would panic. I have not known the Ravens to attack living ewes and lambs to this extent.

Mr. W. Smith told me that on his farm, approximately five miles east of Northam, he found a similar situation with large numbers of Little Crows gathering around a ewe with a newborn lamb, and he found a strong lamb with both eyes picked out.

Mr. Jim Masters informed me that the Little Crows arrived on his farm ("Glen Avon," about 10 miles north-west of Northam on the Toodyay Road) during the last few days of April, and a few were still about on July 18. He estimated that there were about 70 birds on his property, and although he had no trouble with eye picking, he found that a number of ewes that were down and unable to rise had had large pieces of wool plucked from their rumps and along their backs.

A bird collected at Seabrook measured 18½ in. in length and weighed 13½ oz. It appeared to be a youngish bird with brown eyes but the inside of the mouth was beginning to darken. The white bases to the body feathers were very well marked off from the black outer parts.

The weather during the autumn and early winter was unusually dry for this area.

—A. L. MILHINCH, Northam.

A Nest of the Long-necked Tortoise, *Chelodina oblonga*.—Just before noon, November 17, 1968, I observed a tortoise in our lettuce garden in the act of laying. It had dug a hole and had already begun to lay. The tortoise laid twelve more eggs, about a minute apart, and seemed to lower them into the hole with the web of a hind leg.

Laying completed, the tortoise levelled the ground with its hind legs. The soil was hammered firm with the under surface of the shell, the tortoise raising itself on all four legs and dropping quickly to the ground. It then made for the Blackwood River about 200 yards away.

Because of its location in our vegetable patch, the soil around the nest remained damp throughout summer and autumn. In early May 1969 the nest was inspected daily. On May 17, exactly six months after the eggs were laid, the nest was examined. One young tortoise had hatched but had not emerged from the soil. In two eggs the shell had split down its length revealing the back of the young tortoises. The latter after bursting out were larger to an astonishing degree than the eggs they had vacated.

The unhatched eggs were lightly covered with soil, and the site was inspected daily till June 7, when a search of the nest only revealed fragments of egg-shells. The last of the young had evidently hatched and left the nest without noticeably disturbing the surface soil.

—BEVERLEY RUSS, Bridgetown

Bird Life at Nangeenan—On August 29, 1968, I revisited Nangeenan for the first time since leaving there in 1937.

The salmon gum forest on the townsite, which for five years had been my 'hunting ground,' had changed very little in the course of thirty-one years.

I arrived at 0640 hrs. and spent two hours in the forest, the weather being cold, still and fine—good bird-observing conditions.

Galahs (*Kakatoe roseicapilla*) were the most conspicuous birds present, though during my residence at Nangeenan they had been occasional stragglers, seen only from August 1934 onward.

Two Crested Pigeon (*Ocyphaps lophotes*) were an addition to my previous list.

Dusky Miners (*Myzantha obscura*) which had been present in the vicinity of the school for part of my term of residence were now fairly widely distributed through the forest. The school was removed some years ago.

Feral Rock Doves (*Columba livia*) frequented the south-east corner of the forest, occupying hollows in the larger trees just as they had done in the past.

The only other species noted were: Regent Parrot (*Polytelis anthopeplus*), Port Lincoln Parrot (*Barnardius zonarius*), Magpie-lark (*Grallina cyanoleuca*), Weebill (*Smicromis brevirostris*), Red-tipped Pardalote (*Pardalotus substriatus*), Raven (*Corvus coronoides*), Pied Butcher-bird (*Cracticus nigrogularis*), Western Magpie (*Gymnorhina dorsalis*).

This seems a rather poor total. Unfortunately I have no figures of relative abundance for comparison, but I have an impression of a decline in the numbers of certain small birds, notably Chestnut-tailed Thornbill (*Acanthiza uropygialis*), Yellow-tailed Thornbill (*A. chrysorrhoa*), Broad-tailed Thornbill (*A. apicalis*), Red-capped Robin (*Petroica goodenivii*) and Tree Martin (*Hylochelidon nigricans*). At this season, too, I would have expected to encounter at least one of the more nomadic honeyeaters, e.g. the Brown Honeyeater (*Lichmera indistincta*) which was present at Totadgin a few miles to the south.

The environs of the forest are little changed, apart from the impoverishment of roadside vegetation.

—ERIC H. SEDGWICK, Harvey.